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THE WHEAT-GROWING CAPACITY OF CANADA.

By SIR CHARLES TUPPER, BART., G.C.M.G., C.B.

ALTHOUGH the United Kingdom is obliged to import over £200,000,000 of food products for annual consumption, it is satisfactory to know that in the outlying portions of the Empire almost everything that she requires can be produced. The great capabilities of India as a source of supply for wheat, and of Australasia for both grain and meat, are well known; while these, and many other parts of the Empire, are also contributing, in other ways, to the food supplies of Great Britain, and their exports of this character are certain to largely increase. I have been requested to say something as to the wheat-growing capacity of Canada. Canada covers a larger portion of the continent of North America than the United States, excluding Alaska, and comprises one-third of the area of the British Empire. A considerable portion of it lies within the wheat zone, and is admirably adapted for the growth of cereals and cattle. The average yield of wheat in Manitoba and the North-West Territories, may be stated at from 20 to 25 bushels to the acre—a much larger yield than in the United States. This great undeveloped granary has only recently been rendered accessible by the construction of the Canadian Pacific Railway. The farmers now there are chiefly immigrants with but little capital, working under the disadvantages that attend the opening up of a new country, and many of them are inexperienced; but notwithstanding these adverse circumstances the estimated crop of last year, raised by 19,000 farmers, in Manitoba was 23,000,000 bushels of wheat, over 14,000,000 bushels of oats, 3,200 bushels of barley, and 2,200 bushels of potatoes. The wheat crop of 3,000 farmers in the North-West Territories was 7,000,000 bushels. As only the fringe of this great wheat-field has been cultivated, some idea may be formed from these figures of what population and capital could accomplish at an early day. The import of wheat and flour into England in 1890 from foreign countries, represented about 130,000,000 bushels of wheat, and of this the United States supplied about 78,000,000 bushels. The average yield per farmer of wheat in Manitoba and the North-West of Canada being over 1,350 bushels, it will be seen that, with an export of but 1,000 bushels from each farm, it would take only 130,000 farmers to supply the whole demand in this country, and but 78,000 to provide all the wheat and flour that came from the United States. In the United States the total area under cultivation in 1889 was 146,281,000 acres, of which about 38,000,000 acres were under wheat.

In Canada at the present time there are 25,000,000 acres under cultivation, of which, according to the census of 1881, only 2,336,554 were under wheat. Leaving out of computation the unorganised territories in the Dominion, and only taking about 50 per cent. of the area of the provinces as land available for agriculture, it may safely be predicted that in course of time we shall have at least 500,000,000 acres under cultivation. As most of this territory is suitable for the growth of cereals and for the raising of cattle, it will at once be seen how large the exports of such products from Canada may become—infinitely larger than the exports from the United States at the present time.

It is, of course, well known that a very large area of the United States is not fit for wheat-growing; while most of the territory likely to be occupied in Canada lies within the wheat zone. Besides, it is believed that the export of wheat from the United States is likely to decrease, owing to the increasing demand of the growing population, and to the fact that the area under cultivation is not expanding in the same proportion. The average annual production of wheat in the United States during the five years ending 1885 was 463,973,000 bushels, and for the five years ending 1890, 435,417,000 bushels—a decrease of 6·15 per cent. The exports during the same periods averaged 140,026,000 and 113,205,000 bushels respectively—the latter showing a decrease of 19·15 per cent.

So far, I have been chiefly referring to the newly opened up districts of Canada. It is, however, well-known that all the eastern provinces of the Dominion already send large quantities of food supplies to this country. The export of live animals, meat, butter, cheese, wheat, flour, fruit, and other farm and dairy produce, and fish, amounts to about £10,000,000 per annum, the greater part of which goes to Great Britain, and most of the balance to the United States.

In addition to the organised portions of the Dominion, to which my calculations have been confined, there is the immense territory to the north, thus described by a Committee of the Canadian Senate appointed in 1887 to "inquire into and report upon the resources of the Great Mackenzie Basin." After taking a great mass of evidence from men with an extensive knowledge of the country, including Hudson Bay Company's officials, the eminent geological professors, Messrs. Dawson, Bell, Saunders, Selwyn, and Macoun, missionaries, arctic explorers, the Hon. Mr. Dewdney, late Governor of the North-West Territory, and others, issued an interim report, 1888, in which they say:—"That the scope of the Committee's inquiry embraced

1,200,000 square miles of territory, and that there is a possible area of 650,000 square miles fitted for the growth of potatoes, 407,000 suitable for barley, and 316,000 suitable for wheat. That there is a pastoral area of 860,000 square miles, 26,000 of which is open prairie with occasional groves; 274,000 square miles, including the prairie, may be considered as arable land."

In the short time at my disposal, I have only been able to touch the fringe of the subject of this paper; but further information, of a valuable and practical nature, as to the capacity of Canada for wheat-growing, and for the production of other farm and dairy produce, can be gleaned from the reports [which may be obtained at my office] of the twelve British tenant farmers who visited the Dominion in 1890, for the purpose of investigating and reporting upon its agricultural resources. This statement may seem to be in the nature of an advertisement of Canada as a field for emigration, but a perusal of the reports will, I am sure, justify the suggestion I have ventured to make.

It seems impossible to doubt the practicability of producing within the borders of the Empire all the food products required by Great Britain, and it is equally obvious that the competition between India, Australasia, and Canada may be safely relied upon to prevent an increase in the cost of such commodities.

The advantage of being independent of foreign countries in a question so vital as the necessary supply of food will be greatly enhanced by the increased demand in all these great outlying portions of the Empire for the products of British industry in these islands; while, at the same time, powerful British communities will be rapidly growing up in Australasia, South Africa, and Canada, making the Empire strong where it is now weak. A policy with these objects in view would be much wiser than that which has hitherto prevailed, under which the population and capital of this country have largely gone to increase the power of nations which, at any rate from a commercial point of view, do not show any excessive friendship for our Mother Country.
